



## **Transportation Forum June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2013 FINAL Meeting Notes**

The purpose of the meeting was to hear the preliminary results of the traffic data collection and modeling performed by the consultants from BETA Group, Inc. for the Town Center Streetscape and Battle Green Plans. Project Manager Kien Ho, Traffic Engineer Michael Wasielewski and Principal-in-Charge Tony Lionetta were in attendance to review the results and answer questions.

John Livsey (Town Engineer) indicated that two presentations were to be given. The first would focus on the results of the data collection and preliminary traffic modeling which will help determine the lane configuration in the Town Center (either 3 or 4 lanes). The same presentation will be presented to the Selectmen on July 1<sup>st</sup> for their review and feedback. Mr. Livsey said it is important to determine the “skeleton” of the project before preceding with the design plans. The presentations will be placed on the town’s website and a public workshop will be scheduled sometime in September to get further feedback from the public. The second presentation will cover some of the initial options and design concepts the consultants are developing. This is part of the 1<sup>st</sup> phase of BETA’s scope of services. Phase 2 will focus on performing a traffic study around the Battle Green and developing conceptual plans while phase 3 will focus on the 25% design plans of the center streetscape.

Mr. Ho began the presentation (see attached) by giving an overview of the data that was collected noting when they were taken and their locations. Traffic volumes, including turning movements, were collected this past April at 12 intersections along Mass Avenue and Bedford Street from Worthen Road to Woburn Street. Automatic Traffic Recorders (ATRs) were placed at 5 locations throughout the study area to collect 24-hour counts. Mr. Ho noted that the consultants met with representatives from the Tourism Committee, Lexington Historic Society and the Chamber of Commerce to identify other times to collect additional data. As a result of those meetings and working with town staff, those counts will be done this summer to capture tourist activity as well as in/out surveys of the town’s municipal parking lots.

Mr. Wasielewski reviewed the results of the data collection noting that the trends appear to indicate that the majority of traffic, during the AM peak hour, is heading westbound (WB) towards Route 128 and the reverse occurs during the PM peak hour with greater volumes heading eastbound (EB) through the center away from the Route 128 corridor. The majority of intersections analyzed currently operate at Level of Service (LOS) E or F during either the AM or PM peak hour. In addition to collecting and analyzing traffic volumes, data on intersection crashes was gathered. The intersection with the highest reported crash history from 2008-2010 was at Hancock/Bedford/Harrington with 42 incidences.

Mr. Wasielewski briefly reviewed the preliminary alternatives analysis which looked at variations of both 3 and 4 lane configurations. Of the 3 lane options the one with the greatest capacity would have 2 EB lanes and 1 WB lane. The analysis found that traffic operations under a 3-lane alternative would degrade significantly from existing conditions which is currently a 4-lane configuration. Vehicle delays would increase from 58.2 to 181.6 seconds during the AM peak and from 81.2 to 193.9 seconds during the PM peak. The results also revealed that under a 3-lane alternative the traffic model was unable to process a considerable number of vehicles during the assigned peak hour (1,500 during AM; 800 during

PM). Based on the preliminary analysis BETA recommends a 4-lane option should be the preferred configuration for the streetscape.

Peggy Enders (Bicycle Advisory Committee) hoped that the plans would consider ways to discourage drive alone trips and encourage other modes of travel. There are places in the country that create policy and implement programs that discourage single occupancy vehicle trips. Would hope that the study not only focus on moving cars but consider other criteria that are important to the community.

Richard Canale (Planning Board) noted that bicycles do not appear to be addressed in the model and stated the position of the Planning Board is for the study to give weight to other performance measures and not focus completely on Level of Service (LOS). Have you looked at midday peak periods which might have more turning movements than thru traffic? Mr. Wasielewski indicated that bicycles were not accounted for in the model and midday periods were not part of the original scope.

Mr. Canale noted that cyclists currently travel quicker through the center than vehicles waiting in queues and recommended midday counts are conducted to capture volumes and cyclist activity. Would there be other kinds of input or factors that would be presented to the Selectmen?

Mr. Ho indicated that bicycles could be factored into the model but it would be treated as a vehicle in the queues. We would not model how cyclists are currently operating, traveling between parked cars and moving vehicles, which are illegal maneuvers. Mr. Ho noted if bicycles were included it would more than likely worsen the LOS. Later phases of the study will look at how bicycle accommodations can be incorporated into the design.

Mr. Canale would like the center to be as vibrant as possible and believes the final design should encourage families to be able to bike through the center as part of Battle Road Scenic Byway.

Fred Johnson (Lexington Center Committee) noted there was a time when Harrington Road was closed. Was the crash data used in your analysis from this time period? Harrington was open during the time period collected and any reported accidents included those that involved pedestrians and/or cyclists.

Ms. Enders asked if the accident data included the nearby bikeway crossing at Hancock Street. No it only includes the Hancock/Bedford/Harrington intersection not the bikeway.

Mr. Johnson asked if the signal timing was different during the AM and PM peak hours and could you look at phasing during the midday. Mr. Wasielewski indicated the timing was different and that they are looking to improve the signal phasing.

Judy Crocker (Safe Routes to School & School Transportation and Safety Study Committee) asked if pedestrian counts were taken during the traffic counts and if any jaywalking was observed. Yes pedestrian counts were conducted. Mr. Livsey noted that the consultants did observe more pedestrians crossing Mass Avenue at the corner near Candy Castle, where there is no crosswalk, than at the corner connecting to Cary library where there is a striped crossing.

Manny Ferro (Lexington Police Department) indicated that given the fact that the delays associated with the three lane configuration degrades the LOS and is unable to process a significant number of vehicles through the model it is likely that the traffic will spill over into secondary roads and side streets. Would not be able to extrapolate the number of accidents that could occur but assume it would go up. By going to three lanes you would compound and shift the problem to roadways that are not designed to handle such volumes.

Mr. Lionetta noted we have yet to project future volumes in the analysis and many of the intersections analyzed are already performing at LOS F. Creating a three lane configuration would further increase the

delays at these intersections and degrade the LOS. He also indicated that the volumes traveling through the Town Center are higher than what is currently going through East Arlington.

Mr. Johnson asked how bump outs, which would make the Center friendlier to pedestrians, would affect LOS and the capacity of the travel lanes. Mr. Ho indicated they will be looking at various options when considering the sidewalk layouts and how it relates to the traffic lanes.

Michelle Ciccolo (Planning Board) asked if there was a way to test a three lane option and if other alternatives were being looked at beyond what was being presented today. She also asked if any comprehensive surveys had been done of the community to gauge what they would like to see.

Mr. Livsey indicated that it would involve essentially building the roadway in order to test it. It is possible to test certain turning lanes but would be a significant investment.

Captain Ferro said it would probably require code changes because of enforcement issues and that MassDOT regulations regarding turning lanes would also need to be considered.

Mr. Lionetta noted that the 4 lane option is not a solution but rather a balanced approach to handle the current and future conditions of this corridor.

Dave Pinsonneault noted that the Minuteman Bikeway is a resource that runs parallel to Mass Avenue and has good access to the downtown area.

Mr. Canale asked how pedestrian crossings were factored into the model. Mr. Wasielewski did account for the crossings and the behavior of drivers once they see a pedestrian crossing. The VISSIM model looks at behavioral patterns and models each individual vehicle traveling through the center in an effort to capture all of the activity.

Mr. Livsey noted that the full simulation models will be available for viewing at the BOS meeting for review and feedback.

Maryann McCall-Taylor (Planning Director) asked if bicycle counts were looked at for the center. We do have counts on that and will be doing supplemental counts in the summer.

Ms. Crocker summed up the sentiments of the attendees in the room by stating the analysis should account for all users including pedestrians, cyclists and drivers.

Mr. Canale asked what time of day the counts were conducted. Mr. Wasielewski indicated that at 10 of the 12 intersections, counts were conducted from 7-9AM and 4-6PM. Eleven hour counts were conducted from 7AM-6PM at Bedford Street and Harrington Road and Massachusetts Avenue and Woburn Street.

Hank Manz (Board of Selectman) stated that impacts to buses traveling through the center should be considered. Mr. Wasielewski noted that buses have been accounted for in the model and the impacts to their schedules could be identified.

Captain Ferro noted that impacts to emergency response vehicles also need to be addressed.

Mr. Lionetta asked how people thought about eliminating on street parking in the center. Ms. Enders suggested that it should be considered as part of a four lane alternative.

Mr. Wasielewski reviewed the second presentation which looked at some of the initial concept plans with a four lane configuration which included two conceptual plans of Woburn Street and Mass Avenue.

Ms. Crocker asked if there was another T-intersection plan for Woburn and Mass Ave. Mr. Livsey noted that plan was done by Pressley Associates during the initial streetscape study and it has been shared with BETA.

Ms. Ciccolo asked if a roundabout is being studied for the Woburn intersection. The consultants are currently analyzing this option.

Mr. Canale asked what if any concept plans for bike accommodations have been developed at this point. Mr. Livsey stated that the work presented this morning is preliminary. We are in the early stages of this process and wanted to get this out to you for your review and feedback. The alternatives will undergo changes as we continue with the analysis and get feedback.

Due to the length of the presentations and the Q&A that followed, staff did not have enough time to provide updates on ongoing projects and programs. Below is an update on some of this work:

#### Engineering

- **Roadway Construction**

There are multiple roadway construction projects occurring over the next several months including work on Waltham and Bedford Streets. Please visit the link below for more details.  
<http://www.lexingtonma.gov/dpw/constructionprojects.cfm>

- **Eastern Mass Avenue Intersections Project**

The Project Initiation from (PIF) was submitted this past February and was approved by MassDOTs Project Review Committee (PRC) this past April and an official TIP # has been assigned. Work is now focusing on completing a Functional Design Report.

- **Minuteman Bikeway Way-finding Study**

A Public Open House took place Sunday, May 5th at the Lexington Depot to review the draft plan from the Toole Design Group regarding recommendations for improvements to the full length of the Minuteman Bikeway -- to improve wayfinding, intersections, and other amenities that would enhance the user experience. Ten thousand copies of the Bikeway map were printed in late May. It is also posted on the Minuteman Bikeway website,  
<http://www.minutemanbikeway.org/Media/NewBikewayMapFrontBack.jpeg>

- **Hartwell Avenue**

Town Meeting approved funding for design and construction of transportation infrastructure improvements along Hartwell Avenue from the Kiln Brook Bridge to just south of the intersection with Bedford Street.

- **South Lexington Transportation Study**

Consultant has developed existing conditions Tech Memo outlining the data collection process and results. Staff has reviewed and submitted comments and will be working with consultant to schedule meetings with public and business community in the fall.

#### Transportation Services

- **Free Lexpress rides for seniors continues**

The Board of Selectmen has approved continuing this pilot program another year through June, 2014. By allowing senior/disabled riders to board free between the hours of 9am and 2pm, Lexpress has seen a 128% increase in off-peak senior ridership, and double the number of seniors riding throughout the day.

- **Lex-Connect FY14 changes**

Lex-Connect, the town's gift-funded taxi voucher program, begins its second year with big changes

- Voucher prices have decreased from \$5 to \$3
  - Hours of service have been extended to Monday through Friday 9am – 5pm, and Saturday/Sunday 8am – 8pm
  - The service area has been expanded to include: Cambridge, Concord, Newton, Somerville, Watertown and Weston.
- **Human Services Department awarded Dana Home Foundation grant**

Recently the Human Services Department has been awarded a grant to implement a S.O.S. (Senior Outreach Services) program that targets at-risk seniors in the community. Part of this grant includes \$7,500 for free transportation for low-income seniors using Lexpress, Lex-Connect taxis, or local chair-car services.

#### Economic Development

- **Hartwell Ave Shuttle JARC Grant Awarded**

Town of Lexington and the 128 Business Council were awarded a federal transportation grant, known as the Jobs Access and Reverse Commute [JARC] grant, to pilot a commuter shuttle that would provide direct service the Hartwell Business District from the Alewife Red Line Station. The service is scheduled to begin this fall.

- **Parking Management RFP**

The RFP for services is being developed and will be released by mid-July.